



Testimony in Opposition to Governor's Bill No. 6375
(LCO No. 3036)

Presented by
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To: Chair and Members of the Committee on Government Administration and Elections:

On behalf of the Trust for Public Land, I would like to express strong opposition to Governor Rell's proposal to eliminate the Face of Connecticut Steering Committee and the Council on Environmental Quality under Bill No. 6375.

By way of introduction, The Trust of Public Land, a national non-profit organization, works in partnership with landowners, community groups and national, state and local agencies to protect land for public enjoyment. Our Connecticut office is located in New Haven and over the past 15 years we have protected more than 6000 acres in over 60 Connecticut communities.

The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) has served as the state's independent, watchdog agency for the environment for more than thirty years. CEQ provides oversight of our state environmental agencies, monitors environmental conditions, fields and investigates citizen complaints and concerns, and makes recommendations concerning the status of Connecticut's overall environmental health -- all on an annual budget of approximately \$170,000. Simply put, this agency does more with less than most any other agency in the state. To merge CEQ with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) would not only eliminate its function as an *independent* oversight agency but it would also impose further work and responsibilities upon an already underfunded and understaffed DEP.

The Face of Connecticut Steering Committee serves a different although no less important function as an independent oversight agency and should also be spared from elimination. Through program implementation and funding oversight, this committee helps communities plan for responsible growth, land conservation, historic properties preservation and urban restoration. Moreover, during these challenging economic times, it is especially important to ensure that state programs and their funding sources are implemented and distributed in the most efficient manner possible. The Face of Connecticut Steering Committee has proven to be an effective administrator, successfully bringing multiple state departments and interests to the table to determine the best strategies for smart growth in Connecticut.

These committees play a crucial role in protecting Connecticut's environment, defining the character of its communities and ensuring the quality of life of its citizens. The Trust for Public Land respectfully urges the Committee to preserve the independent integrity and work of these invaluable committees.

Thank you for your consideration.

